

CTIP STUDY PROBLEM STATEMENT

Request for Funding

FY 2003

FHWA Strategic Goal Area: Mobility, Environmental Protection

Project Title: Park Road Level of Service/Visitor Experience/Resource Composite Rating

Background: The Transportation community has used Level of Service to describe how a roadway is functioning. In 1992 the NPS began developing the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection framework to address visitor management and user capacity issues. When looking at a proposed transportation project the NPS does not simply consider the level of service for the road, the NPS also considers visitor experience and resources projection.

An example is that during peak visitation periods a scenic area such as Cade's Cove in Great Smoky Mountain NP can experience traffic level of service E or F, basically a traffic jam. If you polled the visitors in this traffic jam about their experience, the experience would rank high; say an 8 on a scale of 10. This is because the opportunity to stop and drive slowly around this scenic loop is a positive visitor experience. If, because of this crowded condition, vehicles are being parked along side the road at undeveloped areas, then from a resource protection standpoint this condition is a negative. The idea that park visitor traffic is willing to accept a lower traffic level of service than they might during their route commute is not new. Visitors polled during construction delays in Glacier National Park stated they enjoyed the opportunity to stop along Going to the Sun Road to see the scenic vistas.

Objectives: This study would examine existing measures of level of service for various types of traffic, visitor experience, and resource protection. Then a national group would evaluate a set of park road project proposals with this new measure or measures. Currently project proposals are evaluated using the CBA (Choosing by Advantages) Decision-making Tool. CBA considers project selection criteria, such as visitor experience, resource protection, and park operations, that are listed in the project proposal form. The criteria gives a good benchmark for testing the new composite measure(s). This study would include:

- Examine and increase the knowledge about level of service measures currently used.
- Develop a national team that would evaluate and develop a new or grouping of existing measures for park roads
- Test the new measure against existing methods of project evaluation, such as the choosing by advantages
- Develop a set of recommendations for a potential composite measure(s)

Status: This composite measurement does not currently exist. This concept has been discussed at a national level with FLH and NPS staff. This concept is consistent with national efforts to collect more comprehensive transportation data for the NPS.

Expected Products and Milestones by Fiscal Year: Through a joint effort among the three FLH Divisions and the NPS a new, more appropriate composite measure of the roadway function in the

National Parks will be developed. The final report will recommend an implementation strategy for application of the new composite measure(s).

Duration: Fiscal Year 2003

Estimated Cost by Fiscal Year: \$75,000

Suggested Organization Method: Organize a multi-Divisional team with membership including NPS to guide a contractor in examining current LOS measures and identifying unique NPS needs for other measures. The contractor will develop appropriate LOS measures based on these needs and develop a protocol to test these measures for project development. The multi-Divisional/NPS team will review and guide the contractor's work. This proposal has been endorsed by Lou Delorme, and Mark Hartsoe, both of NPS-HQ.

Submitted:

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Funding Source: (Check one.)

9 Agency Fund
9 General Fund